

THE

N E W

Parliamentary Register ;

IN A SERIES OF

POETICAL EPISTLES.

DEDICATED TO

CHARLES ANSTEY, Esq.

AUTHOR OF

THE NEW BATH GUIDE.

—RIDENTEM DICERE VERUM—

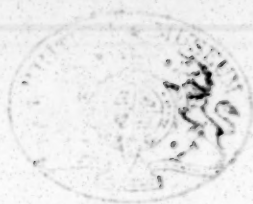
QUID VETAT ?

Hor.

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M.DCC.XCI.



DEDICATION.

TO

C. ANSTEY, ESQUIRE.

AUTHOR OF THE NEW BATH GUIDE.

SIR,

IT has ever been the fate of original genius to give birth to clumsy imitation; that you have not been exempted from the general lot,

B 2

will

will be readily admitted: whether the present attempt to introduce the pleasant offspring of your fancy, Mr. S. B—n—r—d, into a new sphere of action, will be only an additional proof to those we have already witnessed of the impossibility of copying, with any tolerable degree of success, your truly humourous and entertaining Work, must be left to its readers to determine.

It is said that Mr. Addison, to rescue his inimitable Sir Roger de Coverley from incapable hands, put a period to his supposed existence; had you felt the same sensibility with regard to your Hero, you would long since have consigned him to the grave. You have left him,
there-

therefore, to the mercy of your imitators; and
I may presume to offer you these Letters as an
humble tribute of my sincere admiration, with-
out the risque of incurring your displeasure.

I am, Sir,

Your very humble servant,

and admirer,

THE AUTHOR.

THE
New Parliamentary Register.

LETTER I.

MR. B—N—R—D TO LADY B—N—R—D,

AT — HALL, NORTH.

*Mr. B-n-r-d's Reflections on being elected M——r for
the Borough of Gotham—arrives in London—goes to
C—t at St. J——'s.*

SINCE the borough of Gotham has kindly thought
fit,

That in Parliament I as their Member should fit,
By every week's post without fail you shall know,
Dear Mother, how matters at Westminster go.

My

My opponent, Sir Jacob, I'm sorry to learn,
Is resolv'd to petition against the return ;
For though, I've no doubt, when the question is tried,
Which way a Committee, on oath, will decide ;
These Committees, on oath, I have heard people say,
Have decided, sometimes, in a *very odd way*. 10
My neighbours, of Gotham, indeed, were so good
And so kind as to say, if the contest I stood,
That the whole corporation was ready and willing
To seat me without the expence of a shilling ;
Now the canvass, the poll, and the ball, and the feast,
Already have cost me four thousand at least ;
And, at last, this vexatious petition is come,
Which will add t'other thousand, perhaps, to the sum.
But this, and much more, my Dear Mother, I swear,
For the good of my country I'd cheerfully bear ; 20
And there's great satisfaction, deny it who can,
In the honour of being a Parliament man.

How

How conscious we feel of our station and rank,
When an humble acquaintance just begs for a frank ;
Then we scribble the date, and the place whence it
came,

With a *free* in the corner, and *dash* thro' the name.

How we storm if some insolent fellow in trade

Shews too much impatience about being paid :

For a man, when he once into Parliament gets,

Is exempted, you know, from discharging his debts ;

In the country it gives us a wonderful grace, 31

When we meet at assizes, or go to a race ;

What pleasure, attention from all to command,

By enlarging on topics we don't understand !

And, our neighbours, as oracles, almost adore us,

When we hint at the bus'ness depending before us,

Temptations, like these, very few can withstand,

So we lessen our incomes, and mortgage our land,

To

To become that exalted, that dignified thing,
Five hundred and fifty-eighth part of a King. 40
A well furnish'd lodging, convenient and neat,
By the month I have taken in Parliament-street,
Which is handy enough to slip out now and then,
Just to swallow a morsel, and step back again ;
For, if long the debate, it must hurt the digestion,
To wait for one's dinner till after the question.
And 'tis, somewhere or other, laid down as a rule,
That the judgment is best when the stomach is full.
I have both at the Levee and Drawing-room been,
My duty to pay to the K— and the Q— ; 50
He's the best of all Sov'reigns without any doubt,
And most graciously ask'd *if I often walk'd out*,
Which flatter'd me much, though I own I was vex'd,
That he ask'd the same question from one who stood
next,

For

For they say, he possesses beyond other K—ngs,
 The gift of conversing on all sorts of things,
 And is not one of those whose discourses are such,
 That they say very little, yet talk very much ;
 How I tremble to think that so precious a life
 Should have run any risque from a mad woman's
 knife! 60

Indeed, had not heaven averted the blow,
 What we all might have lost——very few of us know.
 Then his aimable confort ! a Q—n, I'll be sworn,
 As prudent and pious as ever was born,
 Nor slander against her dares open her lips,
 Not the diamonds she wears can her virtues eclipse ;
 She bears such implacable hatred to vice,
 That in points of decorum some think her too nice,
 And to female misconduct has never been lenient,
 Except where *good reasons* have made it convenient. 70

Tell Prudence, by way of dispelling the vapours,
If she skims now and then the debates in the papers,
In the list of the speakers, she one day or other
May, perhaps, be surpriz'd with the name of her
brother ;

For, although I'm no orator, still they shall find,
If I please, I can give them a piece of my mind,
And of upright intentions, this notable pledge,
Where the public's in question, a stake in the hedge.
For, I'm told, in the House, a good landed estate
Gives a Member's opinion additional weight ; So
And the names of more speakers than one I cou'd
mention,

Whose rent rolls are all that procure them atten-
tion.

On Thursday, the day we're appointed to meet,
You shall have an account of my taking my seat.

When

When I'll just let you know how the session begun,
And, till then, I remain your most dutiful son.

S—— B—N—R—D.

Parliament Street,
—, 1790.

B

LET-

LETTER II.

MR. SIMKIN B—N—R—D TO LADY B—N—R—D,
AT ——— HALL, NORTH.

*Account of the meeting of P——t.—K—'s Speech.—
Mr. B-n-r-d takes his Seat.—His Observations upon
the Increase of the Peerage, &c.*

DEAR Mother, what words can express the delight
Which an Englishman feels at so noble a fight
As a Monarch, whose virtues the nation reveres,
In Parliament meeting his Commons and Peers ?
This fight, so superb, so sublime in its way,
We'd the pleasure of seeing in London, to-day.
Our street the whole morning was hubbub and noise,
Full of coaches, and ladies, and blackguards, and
boys,

All

All running and crowding to get a good place,
Where at ease they might stare in their Sovereign's
face. 10

No hero of Rome, or of Greece, I'll be sworn,
When in victory's chariot triumphantly borne,
Ever look'd (while the cannon proclaim'd his ap-
proach)

So august as King George in his gingerbread coach.
What immense satisfaction to loyal beholders,
To see his white wig flowing down his shoulders!
With an air, how majestic, he mounted the throne,
To pronounce an oration, that was not his own!
For it seems, 'twould be held of all order a breach,
If he had the least share in composing his speech; 20
Which singular fact, you'll observe, will explain
The immense contradictions those speeches contain,
For his Majesty never, as far as I find,
Was accus'd of too easily changing his mind;

And we know that he rather would risk his dominions,

Than meanly relinquish his royal opinions.

Nor, indeed, is it fit that a Sovereign's plans

Should be rul'd by events, like an ord'nary man's :

Then the Bishops lawn sleeves, and the Lords of the
land,

29

All array'd in their robes, look'd exceedingly grand ;

And the Commons, who stood at the bar with their
mace,

And the Speaker's black gown, cover'd over with lace,

And the ladies, who, dress'd in large hoops, are allow'd

To give grace to the whole, by increasing the crowd.

But my joy, dearest Mother, was never complete,

Till the fortunate moment of taking my seat,

When I walk'd up the House, with a dignified air,

Respectfully bowing three times to the chair ;

On

On my left walk'd young Sapskull, our new chosen

Knight,

And my neighbour, Sir Gregory Goose, on my right ;

Sir Greg. is a brisk little man, and, I hear, 41

Much surpriz'd at not being created a Peer,

But of late they have made such a number, dear Mother,

That the House had not room, I suppose, for another.

This is right, for if Peers are of use in the State,

The more it must prosper, the more they create.

The people in France must have surely been mad,

Who so precious a stock of nobility had,

To abolish them all by a savage decree,

Nor leave themselves even a single Mar—quis ; 50

What brutes on the heads of their betters to trample !

While we, to avoid the pernicious example

Their course and unmannerly conduct affords,

Seem almost to be growing a nation of Lords.

Now your Lord is a species of pillar, I find,
Whose * Corinthian capital graces mankind ;
(As appears by a very sublime publication,
With which a great genius has favor'd the nation)
So their order, if stripp'd of the titles it boasts,
Must remain, I'm afraid, little better than posts. 60
Hence mark with what judgment the Minister labours
To improve by the faults of our wrong-headed neighbours.

The nobles of Gallia, thro' Europe, we know,
Were so highly respected a few years ago,
That scarce a French barber we happen'd to see,
But we courteously call'd him *Monsieur le Marquis*,
That badge of distinction their folly has lost,
And since they no longer this title can boast,
Lest a race so illustrious should quite disappear,
It was right to encourage the breed of 'em here. 70

* Vide Mr. Burke's Letter.

And, indeed, if such persons they often promote,
As they have in some instances, needful to quote,
The *Marquis* of our home manufacture may chance
To rival their great predecessors in France.—
Then the Clerk at the table presented the book,
And the oaths of allegiance, and so forth, I took,
And I swore I possess'd, from incumbrances clear,
And beyond all reprisals, three hundred a year,
An oath I could take without having occasion,
As some have I'm told, to the help of evasion, 80
Who their incomes with such expedition devour,
Three hundred a year does not last them an hour.
This bus'ness concluded, with affable air,
The Speaker was pleas'd, as I walk'd by the chair,
Where in state he was seated, and look'd very grand,
Most kindly to give me a squeeze by the hand,
Said, it gave him great pleasure to see one elected,
Whose name in that house was so highly respected.

Since

Since he'd had the honour of filling the chair,
He had known more than one of our family there ; 90
And observ'd, when they took any part in debate,
That the B—n—r—ds always had infinite weight.—
Now Order being call'd, with inquisitive faces,
All the Members to listen, sat down in their places,
When the Speaker inform'd them, in audible tone,
He a copy had got of what came from the throne,
And respectful attention from all did beseech,
While he read them (twice over*) his Majesty's
Speech.

Then a Member got up, in immense agitation,
To make, as they told me, his maiden oration ; 100

* This, among many others, may serve as a proof that the correspondence of Mr. B—n—r—d cannot relate to modern times, the custom of reading the K—g's Speech twice over having been laid aside, in order not to fatigue the attention of our juvenile Statesmen and Senators by a dull, formal, and unnecessary repetition.

But

But his terror was such, and his voice was so weak,
That I scarcely could hear the young gentleman speak;
When he falter'd and stopp'd, to diminish his fear,
And to keep up his spirits, the Member's cry'd,
Hear!

Yet to cheer him I thought it a very odd way
To cry, Hear! when he seem'd to have nothing to say.
But at last he got on, saying many fine things
Of the best, and the wisest, and greatest of K—ngs;
When he thought to his virtues how much we all
ow'd,

His bosom with gratitude quite overflow'd, 110
Which loyal sensations he meant to express
By presuming to offer an humble address.—
Next rose one, to second the motion, he said,
Which his friend had with so much ability made.—
But 'tis late, my Dear Mother, so now I had better
Prepare for my dinner, and finish my letter,

Give

Give breath to my muse, and adjourn the debate,
Nor make my good friends at the Cocoa-tree wait.

S— B—N—R—D.

*Parliament Street,
Thursday.*

LET-

LETTER III.

FROM MR. B—N—R—D TO LADY B—N—R—D.

*Mr. B-n-r-d's Opinions upon the Sp-n-sh
C-nv-t-n.*

DEAR Mother, I heard in our House t'other day,
With prodigious delight, a great Admiral say,
Who had lately been failing about with the fleet,
That he never saw any one half so complete;
He saw Captains, he said (what a wonderful fight!)
Who were drilling raw failors from morning till night;
He saw mates, ay, and midshipmen too, now and then,
Clap on trowsers, and work with the rest of the men:
Like heroes the troops and marines did behave,
All obeying the orders their officers gave;

10

Nay

Nay, the Admirals, even in some of their trips,
Had the merit of sleeping on board their own ships ;
And the Chaplains, I'll warrant, to edify finners,
Were as constant at prayers, as they were at their din-
ners.

All were happy, no doubt, that these Lords of the deep,
Had earn'd so much glory exceedingly cheap ;
But from something the Minister hinted, I fear,
That the nation will earn it exceedingly dear.
Thus, it seems, that the Dons would have had a good
dressing,

Yet, whatever we pay for it, peace is a blessing. 20
They may say what they please, for my part, I pro-
test,

I believe that our Minister did for his best,
And am sorry to see certain people are glad,
That the best he could do has turn'd out to be bad.

A tale

A tale this convention recalls to my mind,
Which, though not very nice, to the purpose you'll
find.

Two clowns, who were trudging to market one day
To dispose of a cow, made a halt on the way,
When the animal happen'd, as grazing around,
To drop what we need not here name on the ground;
'Quoth Hodge to his partner, I'll hold you my share
Of the cow, you don't eat up what fell from her there,
Cries the other, a bet! and without more ado,
As though 'twere a custard, falls heartily to.
Half the delicate morsels he had manag'd to swallow,
When his stomach objected to what was to follow,
So, disguising his qualms, friend, said he, you'll allow
You're in danger of losing your share of the cow,
But I'm loth by your losses to reckon my gains,
So the bet shall be void, if you eat what remains. 40

Unwilling to forfeit his half of the beast,
Hodge set himself down, and concluded the feast.
Quoth he, now we're quits, yet I needs must declare,
Had we had but the wit to remain as we were,
We might each have been well, neither loser nor winner,

Nor have had to digest this unfavoury dinner.
Much like this seems the case between England and
Spain,

Who as wise as they were, like these boobies, remain;
We agree to draw stakes, and our fleets to recall,
Having risk'd a great deal to get nothing at all,
And the tale and the treaty both end in a way,
'Tis the entrails that suffer, the people that pay.
Many thought e'er we voted our congratulation,
We should learn what had passed in the negociation,
And a right to some sort of inquiry pretended,
Since three or four millions, forsooth, were expended.

To

To this a good answer was easily made,
 That if debts were incurr'd, they must surely be paid ;
 I confess, my dear Mother, till now I had thought,
 And, indeed, from my cradle had ever been taught,
 'Twas the office of persons in my situation,
 To keep a strict eye on the purse of the nation.
 Our ancestors this, from old records, we know did,
 But the doctrine of late has, it seems, been exploded ;
 The furly, illiberal, OLD FASHION'D FELLOWS
 Were of Ministers all, so confoundedly JEALOUS,
 That they held it a maxim, without knowing why,
 'Twas a breach of their duty to vote a supply.
 How their sons are improv'd, what a difference wide
 Between those who suspected, and these who CONFIDE!
 Hence observe how our army and navy increase,
 While we all are enjoying the *comforts* of peace !
 How amaz'd and delighted are neighbouring nations,
 At the noble extent of our fortifications !

Sure so fine a display of our national forces,
Is a proof to the world of our mighty resources,
And grumblers may murmur as much as they please,
Who is there, that knows our condition, but sees
That far other than this would indeed be the case,
Had not CONFIDENCE crept into JEALOUSY's place?
Six hours, by the clock, we discuss'd the convention,
A long time, I found, to keep up my attention,
And although on the whole, I must own, I was tir'd,
One orator highly, indeed, I admir'd.
In a manner at once, both emphatic and meek,
MR. ALDERMAN TIMBER-TOE rises to speak,
Due time he bestows on composing his face,
Then he looks round the House with ineffable grace,
While his eye to the mind of each hearer conveys
The prodigious importance of all that he says.
What the treaty secur'd, to the House he details,
In the trading for cat-skins, and fishing for whales,

And

And he dropp'd a dark hint of some *profits remain-*
ing,

Which policy ty'd up his tongue from explaining.

A merchant knows most of such matters, no doubt,

Yet to plain understandings, 'tis hard to make out,

That the commerce of Britain must flourish much
more

By our trading in seas where we traded before.

I have heard this good magistrate's enemies mention,

As a blot in his 'scutcheon, the holding a pension;

But when lately the contest for London he stood,

He came handsomely forth, as a candidate shou'd,

And by publishing fairly in print the transaction,

He gave the whole city complete satisfaction,

For he prov'd that long since, a most singular case,

He was promis'd a pension, for taking a place.

To amuse you, dear Mother, I send you a sonnet,

Let me know, when you write, your opinion upon it;

This metre, which Milton, that wonderful bard,
Was so fond of, to me seems confoundedly hard ;
Nor will I, though dealing in verses, try any
Where the rhymes are so few, and the lines are so
many.

Good judges, I'm told of such matters commend it,
Though I needs must confess that I don't compre-
hend it,

And although with this sonnet my letter concludes,
I'm a stranger to what, or to whom it alludes.

S— B—N—R—D.

*Parliament Street,
Wednesday.*

SONNET.

JENKY, whose counfels long have held the ear
Of the wise Prince who fills our British throne,
And hast thereby, to all men's marvel, grown
From a plain scribe to be a mighty peer ;
Seek not to move in more exalted sphere,
Lest thy true value be too justly known ;
But be thy wisdom in forbearance shewn ;
And where thou art, arrest thy proud career ;
The worm which might securely crawl on earth,
Chang'd to a fly, with pride expands his wings,
To meet destruction in the taper's flame,
And the base upstart, void of real worth,
Hatch'd into greatness by the smile of Kings,
May prove this reptile's fate and his the fame.

52-108



